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THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

BY

T. L. STRANGE.

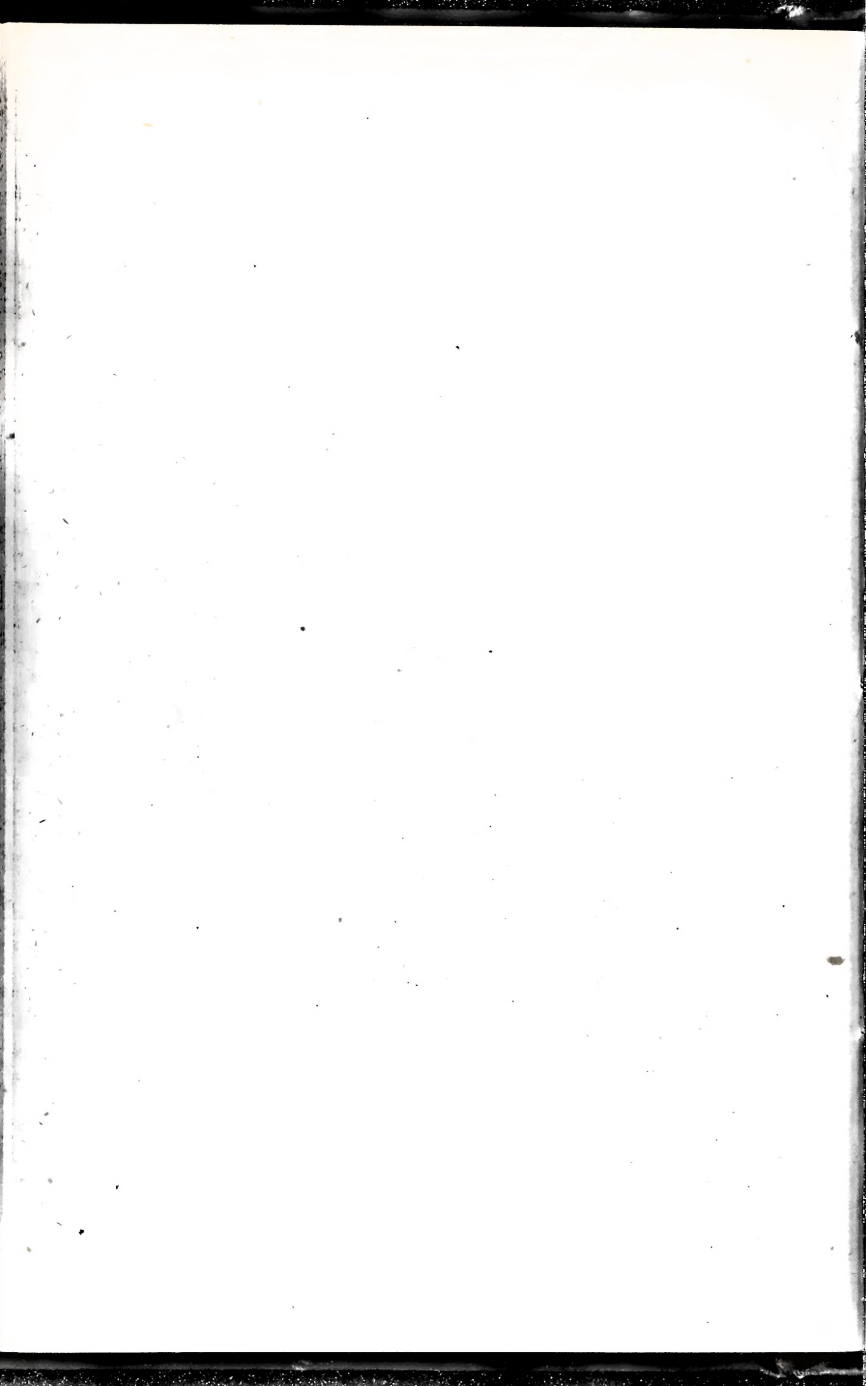


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THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

IN my article for this series on "The Portraiture and Mission of Jesus" I dealt with Prebendary Row's book, issued at the instance of the Christian Evidence Society, and designed to be a reply to the first portion of the anonymous publication entitled, "Supernatural Religion," which treats of the asserted Christian miracles. I now take up the work of the Rev. W. Sanday, also put forth in behalf of the said Society, and offered to meet the latter portion of "Supernatural Religion," which discusses the integrity of the received gospels so far as this depends upon the supports of the early Christian writers.

The author of "Supernatural Religion" does not advance beyond the school of German critics, who make concessions in respect of the early history of Christianity which I, for one, am not prepared to subscribe to; but he has done the cause of free thought the inestimable service of putting forth his views in so masterly and comprehensive a form as to have engaged public attention, and thus has forced the advocates of Christianity to leave their shelter of silence and come forward to answer, as best they can, the representations of an enlightened and modern adversary. Mr Sanday's volume is thus to be hailed by us with satisfaction, and it occupies even a more important sphere connected with current pending questions, than does that of Prebendary Row, which we have already welcomed.

Mr Sanday allows, as all must do, that there is "a manifest gap between the reality and the story of"

Christianity (8).* The matter to be solved, as nearly as we can, is the extent of this gap. He also raises the question "What is Revelation"? but only to show that this is still an unsettled term (9, 10). We have consequently to follow him in a bare line of critical examination, to ascertain, as far as we possibly may at this date, of what value the Christian statements can be held to be in the light of history, the acceptability of Christianity turning mainly on this issue.

And here I am prepared to admit, what is not the line taken by the author of "Supernatural Religion," or the generality of adverse critics, that where any early Christian writer may show a knowledge of the facts and doctrines belonging to Christianity, that circumstance serves to fill up the "gap" respecting which our investigation is to be maintained, even when it is not exactly apparent that such writer is making use of the canonical scriptures. But it is obvious that to be of value for the purpose in view, it is absolutely necessary that the era of such writer should be satisfactorily ascertained. And just in respect of this vital question, Mr Sanday leaves us without materials, saving the martialling of sundry names current in critical circles of those who can only be said to have made guesses on this subject; whereby it becomes apparent that tangible facts, on which we may be permitted to exercise judgment for ourselves on these points, cannot be readily put before us. He says, "To go at all thoroughly into all the questions that may be raised as to the date and character of the Christian writings, in the early part of the second century, would need a series of somewhat elaborate monographs, and, important as it is that the data should be fixed with the utmost precision, the scaffolding thus raised would, in a work like the present, be out of proportion to the superstructure erected upon it. These are matters that

* Here, and elsewhere, when figures are thus introduced, they refer to pages in Mr Sanday's work.

must be decided by the authority of those who have made the provinces to which they belong a subject of special study: all we can do will be to test the value of the several authorities in passing" (58).

Thus on two very serious considerations involved in the discussion of Christianity, we are left by this advocate, when meeting a formidable adversary, unaided by information; namely as to the precise times of the earliest writers who show a knowledge of Christianity, and the value of the accepted scriptures, whenever it was that we got them, as being based upon that divine authority which is currently alleged for them.

Mr Sanday sets out with an appeal to certain of the Pauline epistles as the "undoubted writings of St Paul," here making use of the unguarded and unwarrantable admission by the German critics of four of these epistles, and from this source he naturally holds that there is early "historical attestation" for the Christian miracles, and especially for the great miracle of the Resurrection, in respect of which "external evidence, in the legal sense," he observes with satisfaction, that "it is probably the best that can be produced, and it has been entirely untouched so far" (11, 12). But if it can be shown that there is no evidence for the existence of Christianity during the first century, or for far on in the second; that there has been no such age as the asserted apostolic age; and that these Pauline epistles have the characteristics of forgeries, put together at some unknown times, by Gentile hands, this source of support disappears, and we have to look elsewhere for the first traces of Christianity.*

Before occupying ourselves with those who are commonly considered to be the earliest Christian writers,

* See *The Twelve Apostles; Our First Century; Primitive Church History; The Pauline Epistles; The Portraiture and Mission of Jesus*, all in this series; and *The Sources and Development of Christianity* (Trübner & Co.).

it will be well to examine the pretensions of those on whom dependence is placed for the existence and times of the supposed primitive writers.

The first who claims attention is necessarily the ecclesiastical historian Eusebius. In his day, it is apparent, Christianity was an established circumstance, and our task, consequently, is to endeavour to discern its earliest traces in the period anterior to him. Writing about the year A.D. 315, Eusebius admits that in prosecuting his investigations, he was "the first" who had engaged in such an attempt, and that he had entered upon his researches on "a kind of trackless and unbeaten path," "totally unable to find even the bare vestiges of those who may have travelled the way before him," unless "in certain partial narratives," and with a dubious light to guide him as that of "torches at a distance." The result is, with these imperfect means, he presents us with a volume, purporting to be an exhibition of multitudinous facts, but at the same time shows himself to be one not qualified to act as a pioneer whom we may safely follow in the difficult field before him.

The age he had to deal with, was one abounding in literary forgeries, especially on the part of Christian writers, who justified themselves, by supposing that the importance of the cause they sought to promote, warranted the means they took to advance it. Eusebius has vouched for, and given currency to, such forgeries, not having detected them; he was personally credulous; and he has been guilty of historical inconsistencies and uncritical representations.* Dr Donaldson says of him, "Like all the rest of his age, he was utterly uncritical in his estimate of evidence, and where he, as it were, translates the language of others into his own, not giving their words but his own idea of their meaning, he is almost invariably wrong. Every statement therefore which he makes himself, is

* *The Sources and Development of Christianity*, pp. 2-16.

to be received with caution"; and yet the learned doctor, in endeavouring to place Christianity on an historical basis, has to add, "my first, my best, and almost my only authority is Eusebius. . . . All subsequent writers have simply repeated his statements, sometimes indeed misrepresenting them, Eusebius therefore stands as my first and almost only authority" ("Hist. of Christ. Lit." I. 13, 14). For whatever relates to the first two centuries of the alleged Christian era, in respect of its facts and dates, we have to look to this writer, and no impartial mind can rest satisfied with the statements of one circumstanced as he was, and shown to be what he is, unless these may be found reasonably supported with such corroborative materials as should naturally belong to them.

The next name of importance to the Christian cause is that of Irenaeus, an authority constantly cited by Eusebius, and to whom is traceable the first notice we have that the received gospels are four in number. In treating of this supposed person, I am under deep obligations to an article in this series entitled "Primitive Church History," and a forthcoming one by the same learned writer on "Irenaeus," which I have been privileged to see in the manuscript.

Beyond being frequently cited by Eusebius, Irenaeus is mentioned by Tertullian, but no others of the alleged early writers, not even Hippolytus who is said to have been his pupil, show any knowledge of him. There is a treatise "Against Heresies" bearing his name of which some fragments in the original Greek remain, and a version in barbarous Latin. There is no certainty as to the date of his birth; he is said by some to have been of Greece, by others of Smyrna or elsewhere in Asia Minor; Mr Sanday speaks of "his well-known visit to Rome in 178 A.D." (199), not however citing his authority, who is probably Eusebius; Tertullian is reported to say that he was made bishop of Gaul, it is supposed about A.D. 180;

otherwise we have no particulars of his life. We hear of his martyrdom in A.D. 202 from Eusebius, but there being no other authority for the circumstance, we may consider the date of his death to be as uncertain as that of his birth.

Mr Sanday holds that the treatise "Against Heresies" must have been written between the years A.D. 180 and 190 (326). This production shows an acquaintance with the various branches of Gnostic heretics, and the writer assumes an ascendancy over them as belonging to the orthodox party in the church, denouncing all "unauthorized meetings" as opposed to apostolic traditions and the "pre-eminent authority" of "the very ancient" church of Rome. To have lived at a time when orthodoxy had raised itself above surrounding heresies, and when supremacy and a lengthened measure of antiquity could be ascribed to the church at Rome, necessarily places the writer at a period much nearer the time of Eusebius than is supposed, unless, indeed, his writings have been tampered with at a later day. That he belongs to an era not so remote as is assigned to him, appears also from other indications. He speaks of "good and ancient copies" of the book of Revelation (329), and of the existence of many ancient copies of the "Shepherd" of Hermas ("Against Heresies" v., c. 30); moreover Saturninus, writing it is thought in the beginning of the fourth century, says, "scattered churches of a few Christians arose in some cities of Gaul in the 3rd century," from which we may judge that no bishopric could have been erected there in the second century.

Tertullian is quite as questionable an authority as Eusebius, and the collateral and internal evidence certainly points to the time of the writer of the treatise in question, being of a considerably later date than is assigned to him. But we may even doubt whether the name of Irenaeus, which figures so prominently in the ecclesiastical history, attaches to a real person-

age. The word *εἰρηναῖος*, as observed by Eusebius, and dwelt upon by the learned writer I have before referred to, signifies "peaceful," and affixed to a treatise designed to put down heresies and induce concord of religious sentiment, it may very well have been adopted by the writer as a designation appropriate to the purpose of his work, so that we may be entitled to end our examination with the supposition that it is quite possible we have nothing before us, under the heading of Irenaeus, but an anonymous production, written when or by whom we know not, saving that it came out at some time antecedent to Tertullian and Eusebius.

Tertullian is known of from Eusebius and the writings he has left behind him. He is said to have been of about the period of the supposed Irenaeus, but we can only say that he preceded Eusebius. He is described to have been a bishop of Carthage, but we have no incidents of his life or death. He wrote against Valentinus, Marcion, and other "heretics," which places him beyond the earliest times of Christianity. He was of an age when the sacred text had become extensively corrupted by various readings, and had his part therein. Mr Sanday is engaged with this subject in connection with Tertullian from page 332 to 343. He says, "The phenomena that have to be accounted for are not, be it remembered, such as might be caused by the carelessness of a single scribe. They are spread over whole groups of MSS. together. We can trace the gradual accessions of corruption at each step as we advance in the history of the text. A certain false reading comes in at such a point and spreads over all the manuscripts that start from that; another comes in at a further stage, and vitiates succeeding copies there; until at last a process of correction and revision sets in; recourse is had to the best standard manuscripts, and a purer text is recovered by comparison with these. It

is precisely such a text that is presented by the Old Latin Codex F. which we find accordingly shows a maximum difference from Tertullian!" Then assuming that we have the real time of Tertullian, he observes, "To bring the text into the state in which it is found in the writings of Tertullian, a century is not at all too long a period to allow. In fact I doubt whether any subsequent century saw changes so great, though we should naturally suppose that corruption would proceed at an advancing rate for every fresh copy that was made."

Now it is apparent that the argument can be turned quite another way. If nothing is known of the appearance of the received scriptures till a late time, say the latter part of the second century, as a large class of critics maintain, then the condition of the text and Tertullian's part in it, according to this reasoning, would place him a century later, or far on in the third century. The fact is, throughout this investigation we are left to the operation of the merest guesses. We know not when the text came out, or when it was interfered with by Tertullian and others. The end is that of the actual time of Tertullian we remain ignorant, but see that there may be grounds for placing it considerably nearer that of Eusebius than has been currently asserted.

Whatever was the period filled by Tertullian, as an authority to be appealed to he proves himself to be utterly unreliable. In the first place he was very credulous. He recognized in certain osseous remains the bones of the giants. He believed in the agency of good and evil angels, and that most people had a demon attached to them, who could rule their destinies. He says, "There is hardly a human being who is unattended by a demon; and it is well known to many that premature and violent deaths, which men ascribe to accidents, are in fact brought about

by 'demons.'" He makes use of the fable of the Phoenix as an actuality illustrating the resurrection. He says, as if coming within his personal knowledge, "I am acquainted with the case of a woman, the daughter of Christian parents, who in the very flower of her age and beauty slept peaceably (in Jesus), after a singularly happy though brief married life. Before they laid her in her grave, and when the priest began the appointed office, at the first breath of his prayer she withdrew her hands from her sides, placed them in an attitude of devotion, and after the holy service was concluded, restored them to their lateral position. Then again, there is that well known story among our own people, that a body voluntarily made way in a certain cemetery, to afford room for another body to be placed near it" ("On the Resurrection of the Flesh," c. xlii. ; "On the Soul," c. xxxix., li., lvii.). If we are reading Tertullian, and not introduced monkish fables, the writer is shown to be positively untruthful, as well as possessed of an inordinate love of the marvellous.

That Tertullian in his aim to support the Christian cause was little restrained by scruples in making his statements, is very apparent. He is Eusebius' warrant for the fact that Pontius Pilate transmitted to the emperor Tiberius an account of the miracles of Jesus, and of his resurrection from the dead, representing that the mass of the people believed him to be a god, on which Tiberius proposed to admit Jesus into the Roman pantheon; so that knowledge from Rome reaches Carthage, of a character to establish the incidents of Christianity, after a lapse of say nearly two centuries, which had escaped the notice of all others occupying the intervening space and time. In respect of the tale of the Thundering Legion, when in a time of extremity the Christian soldiers in the ranks of Marcus Aurelius are said to have called down rain by their prayers, and so saved the army from

perishing of thirst, Eusebius likewise received the statement Tertullian has had the assurance to make, that there were letters by the emperor still extant recounting the occurrence, Carthage again standing alone in supplying us with information from Rome. And in his tract "Against the Jews," he boasts, with little attention to truth, of the vast spread of the Christian faith, saying—"In whom but the Christ now come have all nations believed? For in whom do all other nations (except the Jews) confide? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phrygia, Cappadocia, and inhabitants of Pontus, and Asia, and Pamphylia; the dwellers in Egypt, and inhabitants of the region beyond Cyrene; Romans and strangers; and in Jerusalem, both Jews and Proselytes; so that the various tribes of the Getuli and the numerous hordes of the Moors, all the Spanish clans, and the different nations of Gaul, and those regions of the Britons inaccessible to the Romans, but subject to Christ, and of the Sarmatians, and the Dacians, and Germans, and Scythians, and many unexplored nations and provinces, and islands unknown to us, and which we cannot enumerate: in all which places the name of Christ, who has already come, now reigns." This wonderful observer was not only able, in the behalf of Christianity, to draw upon records in the archives of Rome unseen by any other eye, but, as Mosheim points out, he can give us intelligence of "what was done in unexplored regions and unknown islands and provinces;" and, as observed upon by the author of "Primitive Church History," from whom I have the passage, he can people Jerusalem with Jews at a time when under the ban of Hadrian not one of that race could revisit the land without incurring death.

Clement of Alexandria and Hippolytus are the next authorities relied on by Mr Sanday, as by Christian advocates in general. They are mentioned by

Eusebius, and having left writings behind them, it may be conceded that there were such persons, but the notice of them by Eusebius is too meagre to afford satisfaction. They are said to have been about the time of Tertullian, but the end is that we know no more of their true age than we do of his.

The last of those who are now in question as authorities cited by Mr Sanday, is Origen. Eusebius says that this writer suffered persecution in the reign of Decius (A.D. 249-251). Niebuhr, while considering the earlier alleged persecutions to have been highly exaggerated, accepts that by Decius as the first "vehement" one suffered by the Christians, because mentioned by Pagan as well as Christian writers, the Pagan authorities being the "Historia Augusta" and Zosimus ("Prim. Ch. Hist.," 67). We may thus with apparent safety admit Origen as of the period attributed to him, namely, as having lived somewhere towards the middle of the third century.

We have now to consider the circumstances of the earlier Christians, standing as it thought nearest to the time alleged for Christianity, in view of judging what testimony is to be had from this source. I take the names in the order in which Mr Sanday has arranged them.

CLEMENT OF ROME (58-70). Mr Sanday says that the learned place this individual at from A.D. 95-100, but that some put him back to A.D. 70. The dates depend upon purely ideal considerations. There are many writings attributed to this Clement, the whole of which are rejected by Eusebius and the modern critics, with the exception of an epistle addressed to the Corinthians. Mr Sanday cannot satisfy himself that this epistle makes use of the canonical gospels which is the point of his inquiries.

The state of the case is this. Eusebius considers Clement to have been the third bishop of Rome on the word of the doubtful Irenaeus, who says that "the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul" founded this church

and appointed Linus to be the first bishop, that after him came Anencletus, and then Clement. According to the epistle to the Romans, the church of Rome was flourishing before Paul had visited it. He consequently, pursuant to Christian authority, was not instrumental in founding this church. Peter, according to the epistle to the Galatians, was to confine his labours to the Jews, and the Protestants universally disallow that he set up the church at Rome. There is even room to doubt that there were Christians in Rome, during the so-called apostolic days, it appearing, notwithstanding what is said of the world-wide fame of this church in the epistle to the Romans, that when Paul is represented to have gone to Rome, his inquiring Jewish brethren there knew nothing of the circumstances of the Christian faith (Acts xxviii. 22). Josephus, moreover, who was at Rome from A.D. 70 to 93, when he wrote his "Antiquities," makes no mention of Christianity prevailing there or elsewhere. Wrong as to the foundations of this church, the so-called Irenaeus may be equally wrong as to its third successional bishop. Tertullian has it that Clement was the first bishop of Rome, so that such statements as have been made on the subject are contradictory. Of the epistle attributed to this Clement, on which his existence may be considered to depend, we have really no evidence. In 1628 the Patriarch of Constantinople presented our Charles I. with an ancient MS. as derived from Alexandria, and therefore styled the Alexandrine Codex, but its further history is unknown. Attached thereto is an epistle to the Corinthians, the writer of which is unnamed. Hence it becomes a bold statement, after alleging with Eusebius, on the very questionable grounds before him, that there was a Clement bishop of Rome, to declare this epistle to be his work.

BARNABAS (71-76). The time of this person is given as A.D. 130. For this conclusion Mr Sanday has nothing to offer, but that he has arrived at it by "arguing

entirely from authority." He allows that there is no certainty that the epistle attributed to this individual has any citation from the received scriptures, though he thinks it probable that such has been the case. All therefore connected with this name rests upon the merest surmise.

An epistle by Barnabas is first mentioned by Clement of Alexandria. Eusebius knew of such a production but considered it spurious. The Sinaitic Codex, itself a document of doubtful origin, has an epistle appended to it which it is supposed may be the work of this Barnabas, but as it does not bear its author's name, or show to whom it is addressed, or from whence it was written, it requires the utmost hardihood to accept such a production as evidence for Barnabas.

IGNATIUS (76-82). To this person many spurious writings have been attributed. Mr Sanday relies on the criticisms of Dr Lightfoot for such of his ascribed works as may be genuine. Dr Lightfoot does not appear to acknowledge the seven epistles in the shorter Greek recension as from the pen of Ignatius, but says they may be "accepted as valid testimony at all events for the middle of the second century," the grounds for which conclusion are not stated. The three Syriac epistles Dr Lightfoot looks upon as "the work of the genuine Ignatius," while Mr Sanday cautiously observes that they may "probably" be such. There are two dates for the martyrdom of Ignatius, namely A.D. 107 and 115, to one or other of which Mr Sanday supposes these Syriac epistles may be attached, but as respects any testimony to be derived therefrom, in support of the canonical scriptures, he is unable to come to a satisfactory conclusion.

Of fifteen epistles ascribed to Ignatius, eight, being unmentioned by Eusebius and Jerome, are universally disallowed. There are two Greek editions of the seven others, a longer and a shorter one, but the learned have been divided as to which to accept. The tendency has

been to relinquish the longer edition, which Mr Sanday has not deemed it necessary even to notice. Dr Cureton has brought to light three epistles in Syriac to which critics now preferably lean, thus abandoning the Greek versions altogether. According to Eusebius Ignatius wrote his alleged seven epistles when he was on his way to suffer martyrdom, but as he describes himself as then bound to ten men guarding him on the way, of such ferocity as to be referred to as "wild beasts" and "leopards," opportunity for such effusions is not properly conceivable. Not only the date but the place of the asserted martyrdom is uncertain, some saying it occurred at Rome, and some at Antioch. This Ignatius is spoken of by the dubious Irenaeus, whose testimony meets us at every turn, and by Polycarp whose personality is also most questionable. The statement offered in the name of Polycarp is also weakened by its acknowledging the whole of the fifteen epistles attributed to Ignatius, when, according to Eusebius, there were but seven.

POLYCARP (82-87). We hear of him and his epistle to the Philippians from Irenaeus, which, believing in this name, Mr Sanday considers to be "external evidence" of unanswerable weight. Polycarp is said to have been martyred about A.D. 167 or 168, but Mr Sanday prefers Mr Waddington's surmise that it was in A.D. 155 or 156. He considers it not clear that Polycarp drew from the canonical scriptures.

The statement imputed to Irenaeus is that Polycarp had held "familiar intercourse with John" and others "that had seen the Lord," and had often recounted their discourses in his hearing. Judging by the ordinary limits of human life, these contemporaries of the Lord may have survived to A.D. 80 or 90. If Polycarp were martyred in A.D. 155, sixty-five or seventy-five years had then passed away from their time; if in A.D. 168, seventy-eight or eighty-eight years had gone by. We may reasonably ask of what

age Polycarp could have been when he listened to and profited by the said discourses? Assuming that he lived to be ninety, he was possibly then from two to twelve years of age, or from fifteen to twenty-five, but the whole is a matter of uncertainty and depending upon the seemingly fictitious Irenaeus.

Mr Sanday has not ventured to touch upon the particulars associated with the martyrdom of Polycarp, which are of a fabulous order. The saint, it is said, was taken to the stadium there to be put an end to; a voice from heaven greeted him; he was bound to a stake to be burnt alive, but the flames arched round his sacred person and refused to invade it; then he was stabbed to death, and the blood gushing out from his body extinguished the flames. He was thus dealt with simply because he was a Christian, and yet a body of his fellow Christians were allowed to witness the spectacle themselves unscathed. They are stated to have written an account of what they had seen, and the same has been transmitted to us through the never-failing Irenaeus.

Mr Sanday sums up his examination of the writings of the above parties with the supposition that they either employed the accepted gospels, or some other writings closely resembling them, so that they thereby establish "the essential unity and homogeneity of the evangelical tradition," a verdict which will ill satisfy those who are looking for early traces of the inspired record. And thus ends this little band of "Apostolic Fathers," the imperceptible links to the undiscernible Apostles.

JUSTIN MARTYR (88-137). "No one," observes Mr Sanday further back (59), "doubts the Apologies and the Dialogue with Tryphon" attributed to Justin Martyr. "Modern critics," he says, "seem pretty generally to place the two Apologies in the years 147-150 A.D. and the Dialogue against Tryphon a little latter." Following Mr Hort, Mr Sanday considers that

these productions were put forth from A.D. 145-147, and that in the next year Justin died. It appears that Justin had a substantial knowledge of the Christian narratives and doctrines, but what text he followed is a matter of doubt. Mr Sanday's conclusion is that "either Justin used our Gospels, or else he used a document later than our Gospels, and pre-supposing them" (102). "If Justin did not use our Gospels in their present shape, as they have come down to us, he used them in a later shape, not in an earlier." "Our Gospels form a secondary stage in the history of the text, Justin's quotations a tertiary." "This however does not exclude the possibility that Justin may at times quote from uncanonical Gospels as well" (128, 129). He followed a corrupted text, which Mr Sanday argues "is a proof of the antiquity of originals so corrupted" (136), an argument however not helping us to understand when these Gospels were written and corrupted.

Justin and his works have hitherto been accepted upon trust, while being clearly open to question. I am thus more concerned in testing the authenticity of these works than in judging of the acquaintance they exhibit with the Christian scriptures.

"The best part of the information which we have with regard to Justin Martyr," says Dr Donaldson, "is derived from his own writings. The few particulars which we gather from others relate almost exclusively to his death." He is spoken of as having been a martyr by Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Eusebius, "the circumstances of his death, however, are involved in doubt." "There is no clue to exact dates in the history of Justin." "The 'Chronicon Paschale' places" his martyrdom in A.D. 165, a probable date; but there is no reason to suppose that it is anything more than a guess." "If we cannot trust Eusebius, our only authority for placing Justin's martyrdom in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, we know nothing in regard to the date of Justin's death. The

value of Eusebius' opinion is not great, but it is infinitely to be preferred to the utterly uncritical statements of Epiphanius or Cedrenus," who suggest that he died in the reign of Hadrian, or onwards to the year A.D. 148 ("Hist. of Christ. Lit." II. 62-74, 85). I think it is apparent that whatever is to be known of Justin, must be gathered from his imputed works, and should these prove not genuine, that we shall have to part with this long cherished name as that of an evidence for early Christianity.

"Probably," says Mr Sanday, "not one half of the writings attributed to Justin Martyr are genuine" (59). This should induce caution as to the remaining works assigned to the same name. Of the two "Apologies" ascribed to Justin, the second, if not incorporated in the first, which is a matter of doubt, has been lost. The "Apology" we possess is addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, his adopted sons Verissimus and Lucius, the holy Senate, and the whole people of the Romans, and its asserted object was to obtain for the Christians a fair trial, to ascertain in what they might have offended the laws of the state, in lieu of subjecting them to death, simply because they were Christians. On such a subject an appeal to the Emperor as the Chief Magistrate, responsible for the due administration of the laws, would be all that would be required, and it would be an indignity to him to make it appear that his authority had to be supported by that of his sons, the Senate, and the Roman nation at large. The one referred to, by his familiar cognomen of Verissimus, who was the heir to the empire, would assuredly in a public document have been addressed by his proper designation of Marcus Ælius Aurelius Verus Cæsar. The other son, Lucius, was at the asserted time a child, and could not have been thus appealed to. The so-called "Apology" transgresses its required ends in entering upon the tenets of Christian heretics, discussions which could have been only irksome to Roman authorities

It is also contentious and provocative, in lieu of being deferential and conciliatory, as such an appeal, if a real instrument, would naturally be. The gods of the Romans are described as sensual and false-hearted demons who had imitated the circumstances associated with Christ in the Jewish prophetic scriptures in order to defeat the mission of Christ when he should come, and the rulers addressed are adverted to as possibly no better than robbers. And if Christians suffered death in the time of Antoninus Pius, merely because known as such, Justin exposed himself to that fate in openly putting forth this "Apology," and is yet said to have survived to address a second Apology to Marcus Aurelius. Melito is represented to have offered an Apology to this latter Emperor, in which, to urge his case, he said, "For now the race of the pious is persecuted, an event that never took place before" (Donaldson, "Hist. of Christ. Lit." III. 230), a statement giving the assurance that no persecution of Christians occurred under Antoninus Pius, and thus putting an end to the "Apology" of Justin.

The genuineness of the "Dialogue with Tryphon" has been questioned by some, and not without very sufficient cause. It begins with an apparently fanciful representation after the method of the fictitious dialogues in Lucian and Plato—"While I was walking in the morning in the walks of the Xystus, some one, accompanied by others, met me with the words Hail, Philosopher!" and so induced the discussion. Justin describes the course of his own studies. At first, in pursuit of the "knowledge of God," he "surrendered himself to a certain Stoic." Then, leaving him, he "betook himself to another, who was called a Peripatetic." After this he "came to a Pythagorean, very celebrated—a man who thought much of his own wisdom," but was dismissed by him because ignorant of music, astronomy, and geometry. In his helplessness "it occurred to him to have a meeting with the Pla-

tonists, for their fame was great," and he fell in with "a sagacious man, holding a high position" in this school. Finally, when meditating in a "certain field not far from the sea," he was followed by "a certain old man, by no means contemptible in appearance, exhibiting meek and venerable manners," who made a convert of him to Christianity. All is here vague and unreal. We are not told who were these celebrities—the Stoic, the Peripatetic, the Pythagorean, the Platonist, and above all the venerable Christian teacher who might have been an intimate of those of the apostolic age. Tryphon, with whom the dialogue is conducted, is unknown, as is Marcus Pompeius to whom the production is dedicated. A Jew is represented as courting discussion on religious subjects with a Gentile philosopher, whose opinions to him would be valueless, and with facile complaisance habitually yields the victory to his opponent; and every word that passed between them is reported over a space covering in the translation above a hundred and eighty pages of the Antenicene Christian Library. The circumstances have only to be set forth to expose the true character of this composition.

HEGISIPPUS (138-145). Mr Sanday supposes this author to have written in the time of the alleged Irenaeus, or about A.D. 177. He thinks he must have made use of the canonical Gospels, but this is only problematical.

We hear of this person from Eusebius who says he wrote an ecclesiastical history, no part of which is extant. He is stated to have been of the period of Hadrian (A.D. 117-138) and to have "lived during the time of the first succession of the apostles." Knowing of him only from Eusebius we can have no assurance of the age he belonged to, saving that he preceded Eusebius.

PAPIAS (145-160). This individual Mr Sanday observes is reported to have suffered as a martyr about

the same time that Polycarp was martyred. A commentary on the Oracles of the Lord is attributed to him, from which Eusebius presents statements. After discussing these extracts Mr Sanday says: "Everywhere we meet with difficulties and complexities. The testimony of Papias remains an enigma that can only be solved—if ever it is solved—by close and detailed investigations." He concludes that as far as he can see "the works to which Papias alludes cannot be our present Gospels in their present form." We derive our knowledge of Papias from the so-called Irenaeus, upon whom no dependence is to be placed.

THE CLEMENTINE HOMILIES AND RECOGNITIONS (161-187). "It is unfortunate," says Mr Sanday, "that there are not sufficient materials for determining the date of the Clementine Homilies." "Whether the Recognitions or the Homilies came first in order of time is a question much debated among critics, and the even way in which the best opinions seem to be divided is a proof of the uncertainty of the data." These writings Mr Sanday believes draw upon the Synoptic Gospels.

Clement of Rome purports to be the author of these productions, but they are universally allowed to be spurious. The editor of the Antenicene Christian Library looks upon the "Recognitions" as "a kind of philosophical and theological romance."

BASILIDES (188-196). This person was a Gnostic who is said to have taught at Alexandria in the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 117-137). He is spoken of by Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Origen and Eusebius, as also by Epiphanius who is said to be of A.D. 367. There is a gospel attributed to him, but what it contained appears to be subject of doubt. Mr Sanday thinks he or his followers may have served themselves of the first and third accepted gospels.

The authorities cited are too far removed from the time alleged for Basilides to be satisfactory as to his

date, nor does it appear that the facts or doctrines of Christianity are properly traceable to him. "Practically," says Mr Sanday, "the statements in regard to the Commentary of Basilides lead to nothing."

VALENTINUS (196-203). Our knowledge of this Gnostic teacher is derivable chiefly from the supposed and ever-ready Irenaeus, but Mr Sanday allows that "it cannot be alleged positively that any of the quotations or allusions," ascribed to this person, "were really made" by him, it being possible that they come from his school. The acceptance of the four gospels in this quarter he observes, "rests upon the statement of Irenaeus as well as upon that of the less scrupulous and accurate Tertullian." A passage associated with the third gospel is given by Hippolytus, but "it is not certain that the quotation is made from the master and not from his scholars." Mr Sanday claims for this teacher and his followers a time spreading from A.D. 140 to 180, but the dates must be taken as merely supposititious.

MARCION (204-237). Mr Sanday places this person at about A.D. 139-142, but allows that in connection with him "there is some confusion in the chronological data." "The most important evidence is that of Justin," but who is to answer for Justin himself? Mr Sanday also seeks to support himself with the shadowy and never-failing Irenaeus, the untrustworthy Tertullian, and Epiphanius, himself an ignorant uncritical man,* and standing too far removed from the time spoken of to be an authority on that head. "A certain Gospel" is attributed to Marcion, but "the exact contents and character of that Gospel are not quite so clear." In judging thereof, Mr Sanday points out, that a critic of "the nineteenth century should be able to thread all the mazes in the mind of a Gnostic or an Ebionite in the second." The question is did Marcion mutilate our third Gospel, "or is it not possible that

* *The Sources and Development of Christianity*, p. 38.

the converse may be true, and that Marcion's Gospel was the original and ours an interpolated version?" At this date of time it is not possible to decide such a question, though Mr Sanday and others have their opinions on the subject.

TATIAN (238-242). This individual is said to have been converted to Christianity by Justin Martyr. "The death of Justin," says Mr Sanday, "is clearly the pivot on which his date will hinge." "An address to the Greeks" is attributed to Tatian, "but it contains no references," as Mr Sanday allows, "to the Synoptic Gospels upon which stress can be laid." A "Diatessaron" is traced to him which the ever-ready Irenaeus describes as having been a harmony of the accepted Gospels.

Justin's era, and even identity or personal existence, being matters of uncertainty, we are equally in the dark as to what relates to his alleged disciple Tatian. "We know nothing of the time of his birth, or of his parents, or of his early training." Irenaeus "speaks as if he knew very little about him." "Nothing is known of his death" (Donaldson, "Hist. of Christ. Lit." III. 4, 8-10, 20).

DIONYSIUS OF CORINTH (242, 243). The interest in this person turns upon his use of the phrase "The Scriptures of the Lord," which, having "Irenaeus in his mind's eye," Mr Sanday thinks may probably refer to the canonical Gospels. We know of him only from Eusebius whose information relates almost exclusively to his letters. To his date there seems to be no clue.

MELITO (244, 245). Mr Sanday says nothing as to this person's time, and observes that the fragments imputed to him "contain nothing especial on the Gospels."

He is said to have addressed an Apology to Marcus Aurelius. "We know nothing of his life," says Dr Donaldson, "except that he went, as he tells us himself, to the East." "Our principal authority in regard to

the works of Melito is Eusebius" ("Hist. of Christ. Lit." III. 221-223).

APOLLINARIS (246-248). He is said to have addressed an Apology to Marcus Aurelius, and is thus placed by Mr Sanday at from A.D. 176-180. There is a fragment attributed to him connected with the Paschal controversy by a writer in the "Paschal Chronicle," but as this takes us to the seventh century, Mr Sanday does not insist upon the reliability of the fragment. He is mentioned by Eusebius who cites one Serapion, but who he was no one knows.

ATHENAGORAS (248-251). Though not noticed by either Eusebius or Jerome, Mr Sanday looks upon this person as "an author of a certain importance." An Apology addressed to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, and a treatise on the Resurrection, are ascribed to him. The Apology, Mr Sanday considers may be dated about A.D. 177. He cites a passage from this writer having a close correspondence with one in the first Gospel, but says that "he cannot, on the whole, be regarded as a very powerful witness" for the Synoptic Gospels.

The earliest to mention Athenagoras is Philip of Sida, a Christian writer of the fifth century, removed by about two centuries and a half from the alleged time of the author spoken of, and concerning whom no one appears to have had knowledge during this long interval. Dr Donaldson looks upon Philip of Sida as an unreliable writer.

THE EPISTLE OF VIENNE AND LYONS (251-253). The persecution spoken of in this letter Mr Sanday considers to have occurred in A.D. 177. He is satisfied that there is a phrase in the letter taken from the third Gospel.

The extracts we have from this letter come from Eusebius. In his history he says the persecution in question occurred in the seventeenth year of the reign of Marcus Aurelius, which is the statement Mr Sanday has followed, but in his "Chronicon" it is alleged to have happened ten years earlier. In the letter the allegation

is that Christians, on the mere ground that they were Christians, were fastened into iron chains and burnt to death, or thrown before wild beasts and torn to pieces, acts said to have been sanctioned by the mild, philosophic, and law-respecting emperor we have in view. Dr Donaldson appears to accept the letter as a genuine production by some unknown writer of the period, but says, "The style is loose. It abounds in antitheses and strong expressions. It also mixes up incongruous figures. Its statements are not, therefore, to be looked on as cold historical accuracies" ("Hist. of Christ. Lit." III. 250-274). In treating of Irenaeus I have pointed out that there is room to question the existence of churches in Gaul during the second century, and it will be seen hereafter that these alleged early persecutions cannot be said to rest upon any true historical basis.

PTOLEMAEUS AND HERACLION (254-260). These are Gnostic teachers who are spoken of by Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Hippolytus. Mr Sanday considers that Irenaeus wrote of Ptolemaeus in A.D. 182, and may have met with him on his visit to Rome in A.D. 178 when he had already formed a school. Clement of Alexandria shows that Heraclion was acquainted with the third Gospel, and Origen says he wrote a commentary on the fourth. Epiphanius attributes to him an epistle to one Flora containing references to the first Gospel. Heraclion is always coupled with Ptolemaeus, and is therefore supposed to be of the same standing.

We can derive no certainty of the times of these Gnostic teachers from Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Hippolytus, whose own eras are so uncertain. From the testimony of Origen we may admit their existence at some period preceding the middle of the third century.

CELSUS (260-263). We know of this writer through the pages of his opponent Origen, who considered him to be an Epicurean of the time of Hadrian or later; "exact and certain knowledge, however, about Celsus,"

Mr Sanday observes, "Origen did not possess." Towards establishing his period the effort is made to identify this Epicurean with one bearing the name of Celsus who was a Neo-platonist, and a friend of Lucian, whose time is known of, and this identity is maintained by Keim, whom Mr Sanday considers it safe to follow; and it is on these hypothetical grounds that Origen, who wrote at some time during the first half of the third century, is supposed to have been matching himself with Celsus of about A.D. 178. Mr Sanday appears, however, a little uncertain about the position, as he winds up by saying, "At whatever date Celsus wrote, it appears to be sufficiently clear that he knew and used all the four Canonical Gospels."

THE CANON OF MURATORI (263-268). A fragment of this canon alone is extant, beginning with a reference to the third and fourth Gospels, whence Mr Sanday fairly enough concludes that in the wanting part of the document the first and second Gospels were included. Most of the other writings of the New Testament are spoken of in the fragment in question. "The Pastor" of Hermas is alluded to as a then recent production put forth in the time of Pius, the brother of the author, who was bishop of Rome. Pius is said to have occupied the episcopate from A.D. 142-157, on which grounds Mr Sanday presumes that the Muratorian Fragment was put forth from A.D. 170-180.

We have first of all to accept as reliable the statement which would associate this canon with the asserted Pius of Rome, and having done this we have to accept his time; but we are without any assurance that there was such a bishop other than the appearance of that name in the list of bishops of Rome given by Eusebius for which he has adduced no authority.

Mr Sanday concludes with discussing the evidences to the recognition of the fourth Gospel, and the state of the canon in the latter part of the second century, but as his dependence in respect of these

matters is on the names we have already discussed, it is not necessary to go over these grounds with him.

It has not fallen within the scope of Mr Sanday's work to introduce possible evidences for Christianity in the early times from the circle of writers outside the Christian field, but it is essential to the position I have to maintain that this branch of the subject should be understood. I state my conclusions on this part of the inquiry, but must refer my readers for the supports thereto to my work on the Sources and Development of Christianity.

The Jewish writers of the period alleged for the uprise of Christianity naturally first deserve our attention. The earliest of these is Philo Judæus, whose works are fortunately extant, and untampered with. He wrote upon the Old Testament and other associated subjects of interest to his people, and being of Alexandria and of the Neo-platonic school there prevailing, he embarked in representations of the Logos, or personified Word of God, corresponding closely to what were afterwards attributed to Christ in the fourth Gospel. He is seen to have visited the temple at Jerusalem as every devout Jew was bound to do, and he also went on a mission to Rome in A.D. 42. The next to be noticed is Nicolaus of Damascus, a learned and eloquent Jew, more than once the chosen advocate of his people, and the friend and defender of Herod and of his successor Archelaus before the court of Rome. We hear of him through Josephus. The third is Justus of Tiberias, that city on the border of the lake of Gennesareth with which so much of the action described in the Gospel histories is connected. He was a contemporary of Josephus and opposed his measures in Galilee. He was thus of the generation succeeding that alleged for Christ, and wrote a history of the Jews which is referred to by Josephus, and has been described by Photius, a well-known

Byzantine writer of the ninth century. The fourth is Josephus who was born in A.D. 37, and wrote his account of the Wars of the Jews in A.D. 75, and his "Antiquities" in A.D. 93. He was of Jerusalem, was deputed to put down a sedition in Galilee, was cognizant of the circumstances of Antioch and Damascus, and lived at Rome from A.D. 70 to the close of the century. He was one occupied with Jewish interests, and familiar with all the alleged earliest centres of Christianity in the generations when it is said that the faith first prevailed and was promulgated. The last source to be considered is the Talmud. This voluminous collection of writings represents the phases of Jewish thought, religious, scientific, literary, and historical, for about a thousand years calculated from the return from the Babylonish captivity. The earliest edition thereof certainly dates after the establishment of Christianity, but it is looked upon as a faithful record of the more ancient traditions. Now if Jesus was what he is declared in matured Christianity to have been, a god on earth, filling the regions round about him with the fame of his wondrous works, and realizing the position of the Jewish Messiah, he must have been heard of in the quarters occupied by the writers described, and he himself, and the movement he is said to have instituted, would have found a place in their several historical and literary productions; but not a notice of him or his followers appears therein, from which silence, on such a subject, by the interested Jews, no other conclusion can be fairly drawn than that the narratives we have of this personage are not based upon actual occurrences, but are mere fanciful representations composed in later times for the support of an ideal and highly artificial faith. So clearly did it appear to the early Christians that some allusion to Christ and his people should have occurred in these Jewish histories, that they have not hesitated to introduce in the pages of Josephus passages respecting Christ,

John the Baptist, and James the just "the brother of the Lord," which, when exposed as forgeries, serve to prove the barrenness of a cause that has to be thus supported.

When we turn to Pagan sources for any genuine record of the existence of early Christianity, the same absolute dearth of evidence and unscrupulous attempts to supply the need, meet us. The writings of Pliny the younger, Tacitus, and Suetonius, have been tampered with in a manner similar to that adopted in the instance of Josephus, in order to make it appear that Roman writers of note were cognizant of the movement; but, as noticed by the author of "Primitive Church History," the persons so guilty of endeavouring to practise upon our credulity, in furnishing materials of evidence for the first century of the asserted Christian era, have committed the mistake of overlooking that to keep up the fictitious representation it was requisite that similar evidence should have flowed on in the second century.

A fertile expedient for the exhibition of Christianity in the early days asserted for its existence, is the statement that Christians in those times frequently suffered persecution because of the faith they held. The emperors Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus, Aurelius, Severus, and Maximin, re] said so to have oppressed them at various times from A.D. 64 to the early part of the third century, leading to formal apologies, or explanations of the tenets of Christianity, being presented to avert such persecutions. Hadrian is stated thus to have been addressed by Quadratus, and Aristides; Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius in succession by Justin Martyr; and the latter emperor furthermore by Melito, Apollinarius, and Athenagoras; and ostensibly to his reign the epistle of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons belongs. The persecution by Nero depends on passages in Tacitus and Suetonius, and that by Trajan on the alleged letter of Pliny the younger to that emperor,

all of which may be shown to be fabrications;* and the testimony of Melito clears all preceding Marcus Aurelius of the imputation in question.† The remaining Apologies, four in number, coupled with the letter ascribed to the Churches in Gaul, are associated with the name of Aurelius. The selection made of this emperor for the support of the Christian allegations is an unfortunate one, his character being quite other than would belong to an oppressor and destroyer of harmless people. He was styled Verissimus because of his sincerity and love of truth; when Cassius sought to usurp his throne he mercifully forgave those concerned in the conspiracy; he devoted himself to philosophy and literature; "in jurisprudence especially, he laboured throughout life with great activity, and his constitutions are believed to have filled many volumes;" his "education and pursuits" "exercised the happiest influence upon a temper and disposition naturally calm and benevolent." "He was firm without being obstinate; he steadily maintained his own principles without manifesting any overweening contempt for the opinion of those who differed from himself; his justice was tempered with gentleness and mercy." "In public life, he sought to demonstrate practically the truth of the Platonic maxim, ever on his lips, that those states only could be truly happy which were governed by philosophers, or in which the kings and rulers were guided by the tenets of pure philosophy." "No monarch was ever more widely or more deeply beloved. The people believed that he had been sent down by the gods, for a time, to bless mankind, and had now returned to the heaven from which he descended" (Smith's "Dict. of Greek and Roman Biography"). This was certainly not the man to have initiated the violent and cruel persecutions with which the Christians charge him.

* *The Sources and Development of Christianity*, pp. 32-36.

† See *ante*, p. 22.

From such questionable and unsupported accusations we may turn to something like reliable history. "After many years," says Lactantius, who lived to A.D. 325, "that execrable animal appeared, Decius, who persecuted the church." "Most of the Roman emperors of this (second) century," observes Mosheim, "were of a mild character." "But when Decius Trajan came to the imperial throne (A.D. 249), war, in all its horrors, burst upon the Christians." Decius, says Niebuhr, "was the first who instituted a vehement persecution of the Christians, for which he is cursed by the ecclesiastical writers as much as he is praised by the Pagan historians" (the latter being the writers of the "*Historia Augusta*" and Zosimus). "The accounts," Niebuhr continues, "which we have of earlier persecutions are highly exaggerated, as Henry Dodwell has justly pointed out. The persecution by Decius, however, was really a very serious one; it interrupted the peace which the Christian church had enjoyed for a long time" ("*Prim. Ch. Hist.*", pp. 66, 67).

The learned author of "*Primitive Church History*" takes his stand upon this event—the persecution of the Christians by the emperor Decius—as affording the first date connected with Christianity, historically demonstratable, that can be put before us, and in this conclusion I entirely concur. We are not to be influenced by mere authority on such a subject. Credner, Volkmar, Hilgenfeld, Baur, Ewald, Keim, and a host of others of the German school, and Westcott, Scrivener, Lightfoot, Hort, and McClellan of the English school, depended upon more or less by Mr Sanday, are not more likely to see the unseen or discover the non-existent than others. What we look for are facts, and not surmises, however ingeniously arrived at or learnedly sustained, and if there be a date, resting on independent grounds, for any event or person connected with Christianity, antecedently to A.D. 249, we

are persuaded that it has yet to be brought to light and put before us.

It is apparent that there were Christians in existence before the time of Decius, who, meeting with them, sought to put them down by violent measures; but it is not necessary to suppose that it occupied any lengthened period to establish Christianity, even in its matured form. The various phases of Christianity have had their antecedent expression of doctrinal belief; the Gnostics grew out of the Neo-platonists of Alexandria; the Judaic Christians or Ebionites followed Judaism, especially as exhibited by the Essenes and Therapeuts; and the Pauline Christians, finally becoming the orthodox party, are derivable from Grecian Paganism.* We have seen how readily diversities of religious persuasions can be built up on what has gone before, and can suppose for Christianity a like facile origin. Thus Mahommedanism flourished in the days of Mahommed; Protestantism in those of Luther; the Quakers became a considerable body in the time of their founder George Fox; Wesleyanism was established on broad foundations in that of John Wesley; Irvingism in that of Edward Irving; Puseyism, leading on to Ritualism, in that of Dr Pusey; Brethrenism in that of John Darby; Mormonism in that of Joseph Smith; and New Forest Shakerism in that of Mrs Girling. A generation or two therefore might have sufficed to produce the Christianity against which Decius Trajan set his face.

The positive evidence for Christianity in its asserted early times having failed us, we become entitled to weigh the negative evidence affecting the question. The time of Nicolaus of Damascus covers the period of the alleged divine nativity of Jesus and of the slaughter by Herod of the infants of Bethlehem; that of Philo Judæus embraces the whole period attributed to Jesus; those of Justus of Tiberias and Josephus represent the generation following Jesus, the time of Josephus as

* *The Pauline Epistles.*

an author extending to A.D. 93 ; the times of Pliny the younger, Tacitus, and Suetonius occupy from A.D. 106 to 110 ; and the Talmudic traditions comprehend the age ascribed to Jesus and several centuries preceding him. These being sources from which evidence for Christianity might be reasonably looked for, and none appearing therein but what has been fabricated, we may conclude that to inquiring and interested minds of the earliest periods nothing was known of Christ or his followers through his asserted life-time and onwards to A.D. 110. The Synoptic Gospels, in the guise of a prophecy, show a demolition of the temple at Jerusalem so complete that not one stone was left upon another, and in 1 Thess. ii. 16 we hear that the "wrath" of God had "come upon" the Jews "to the uttermost"; circumstances true of the time of Hadrian rather than of that of Titus, and advancing us to A.D. 135. The scripture records containing these material statements we may presume were not put together till after the year in question when Hadrian devastated Judea. The Apologists are represented to have lived and written of persecutions occurring from the era of Hadrian to that of Marcus Aurelius, or from A.D. 117 to 180 ; but when it becomes apparent that these representations are destitute of foundation, we may be satisfied that they have been introduced to support Christianity with proofs of its prevalence at times when there was no real evidence of its existence to be offered. We arrive thus at the conclusion that to the year A.D. 180, or for five generations following the period assigned for the death of Jesus, there was no such thing known of or professed as Christianity.

There occur then about seventy years to the time of Decius, during which we are to presume that Christianity had its rise, and prevailed sufficiently to have attracted the opposition of this persecuting emperor. The writer of the third Gospel shows us that "many had taken in hand" to describe the life of Christ be-

fore the appearance of his effort. These were necessarily unauthorized or apocryphal scriptures, as Origen has recognized to have been the fact, of which we know that there were upwards of fifty such apocryphal gospels, whereof seven are still extant. The earliest Christian writers made use of these unauthorized scriptures, as for example the reputed Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, Papias, and the author of the Clementine Homilies. The heretics, who were a numerous body, held to these and not to the accepted scriptures. The so-called Irenaeus, while limiting the gospels to four in number, cites the "Shepherd" of Hermas and incidents still found in the gospel according to Nicodemus as authoritative, and in disregard of the statements in the canonical scriptures, maintains, from some other source, that it was necessary that Christ should pass through the different stages of human existence, and thus did not end his days till he was upwards of fifty years of age. Athenasius, in the fourth century, followed the gospel of Nicodemus in respect of the descent of Christ to Hades, an event also indicated, we may assume from the same source, in the accepted scriptures (Eph. iv. 9; 1. Pet. iii. 19; iv. 6), and which has been presented as an object of belief to the church in what is called the Apostle's Creed. At the same period Eusebius informs us that the gospel according to the Hebrews maintained its ground with some to his time ("Ec. Hist." III. 25). There are other passages of the received scriptures, as pointed out by the author of "Primitive Church History," which would seem to be traceable to apocryphal productions, such as occur in Matt. xxiii. 35; Acts xx. 35; Rom. xv. 19, 24; 1 Cor. xv. 6; Jude 14.

Mr Sanday's very candid treatment of the testimony of Papias affords valuable material in dealing with the subject now before us. He admits freely that the Gospel of Mark to which Papias referred is not the one

admitted into the canonical collection, this latter, according to the conclusion he is obliged to arrive at, not being "original but based upon another document previously existing" (149). "No doubt," he continues to observe, "this is an embarrassing result. The question is easy to ask and difficult to answer—If our St Mark does not represent the original form of the document, what does represent it"? Papias had described the Gospel of Mark he knew of as not written in order, while Mr Sanday finds that "the second Gospel is written in order," and therefore cannot be the "original document" of which Papias has spoken (151). The testimony affecting the canonical Gospel according to Matthew is of an equally fatal nature. This Gospel, as Papias has shown, should have appeared in Hebrew, which was the form in which he was acquainted with it, but ours is in Greek, and as Mr Sanday further notices it uses the Septuagint and not the Hebrew Scriptures, and it has "turns of language which have the stamp of an original Greek idiom and could not have come in through translation." "Can it have been," he asks, "an original document at all"? To which his reply is, "The work to which Papias referred clearly was such, but the very same investigation which shows that our present St Mark was not original, tells with increased force against St Matthew" (152).

We may next consider the condition in which these writings have been transmitted to us, and no one could more faithfully and unreservedly describe this than has done Mr Sanday.

The scheme of the New Testament is avowedly based upon what appears in the Old Testament. Mr Sanday says, "the whole subject of Old Testament quotations is highly perplexing. Most of the quotations that we meet with are taken from the LXX. version: and the text of that version was at this particular time especially uncertain and fluctuating" (16, 17). Mr Sanday is here occupied with the quotations made by

the early Christian writers, but the time alleged for them approaches that asserted for the Canonical Scriptures, and Mr Sanday's observations embrace the latter description of writings also. He says, for example, that "in Eph. iv. 8 St Paul quotes Ps. lxxviii. 19, but with a marked variation from all the extant texts of the LXX." (17). Again he adds, "Strange to say, in five other passages which are quoted variantly by St Paul, Justin also agrees with him" (18). "In two places at least Clement agrees, or nearly agrees, with St Paul, where both differ from the LXX." (19). "Another disturbing influence, which will affect especially the quotations in the Gospels, is the possibility, perhaps even probability, that many of these are made, not directly from either Hebrew or LXX., but through the Targums. This would seem to be the case especially with the remarkable applications of prophecy in St Matthew" (19). Mr Turpie is referred to for the details he exhibits. Of 275 quotations from the Old Testament in the New, 37 agree with the LXX., but not with the Hebrew; 76 differ both from the Hebrew and the LXX., where the two are together; 99 differ from them where they diverge; and 3, "though introduced with marks of quotation, have no assignable original in the Old Testament at all" (20, 21). "But little regard—or what according to our modern habits would be considered little regard—is paid to the sense and original context of the passage quoted," the instances given being Matt. viii. 17; xi. 10; 2 Cor. vi. 17; and Heb. i. 7 (24). "Sometimes the sense of the original is so far departed from that a seemingly opposite sense is substituted for it," the instances being Matt. ii. 6; Rom. xi. 26; and Eph. iv. 8 (24). In Matt. xxvii. 9, 10, Jeremiah has been cited in lieu of Zechariah; in Mark ii. 26, Abiathar has been named in lieu of Abimelech; and "in Acts vii. 16 there seems to be a confusion between the purchase of Machpelah near Hebron by Abraham and Jacob's

purchase of land from Hamor the father of Shechem" (25). Matt. ii. 23; John vii. 38, 42; Eph. v. 14, and the second of the citations in 1. Tim. v. 18, "can be assigned to no Old Testament original" (25).

The text of the scripture in the various versions made thereof became corrupted, of which Origen and Jerome have seriously complained. Mr Sanday cites Dr Scrivener who observes, "now it may be said without extravagance that no set of Scriptural records affords a text less probable in itself, less sustained by any rational principles of external evidence, than that of Cod. D. of the latin Codices, and (so far as it accords with them) of Cureton's Syriac. Interpolations as insipid in themselves as unsupported by other evidence abound in them all It is no less true to fact than paradoxical in sound, that the worst corruptions to which the New Testament has ever been subjected originated within a hundred years after it was composed." To which Mr Sanday adds, "This is a point on which text critics of all schools are substantially agreed. However much they may differ in other respects, no one of them has ever thought of taking the text of the Old Syriac and Old Latin translations as the basis of an edition. There is no question that this text belongs to an advanced, though early, stage of corruption" (135, 136). "The first two chapters [of Matthew] clearly belong to a different stock of materials from the rest of the Gospel." "If Luke had had before him the first two chapters of Matthew, he could not have written his own first two chapters as he has done" (153). "For minor variations the text of Irenaeus cannot be used satisfactorily, because it is always doubtful whether the Latin version has correctly reproduced the original." The text of Tertullian having "been edited in a very exact and careful form," Mr Sanday says, "I shall illustrate what has been said respecting the corruptions introduced in the second century chiefly from him" (332, 333). Mr Sanday

quotes from Dr Scrivener who states, "Origen's is the highest name among the critics and expositors of the early church; he is perpetually engaged in the discussion of various readings of the New Testament, and employs language in describing the then state of the text, which would be deemed strong if applied even to its present condition with the changes which sixteen more centuries must needs have produced 'But now,' saith he, 'great in truth has become the diversity of copies, be it from negligence of certain scribes, or from the evil daring of some who correct what is written, or from those who in correcting add or take away what they think fit'" (328).

In the Pauline epistles, the author constantly refers to his having written them with his own hand (1 Cor. xvi. 21; Gal. vi. 11; Col. iv. 18; Philemon 19), this being "the token in every epistle" (2 Thess. iii. 17), and when another hand was employed, he was mentioned by name (Rom. xvi. 22). The reason for the alleged caution apparently is that the churches were disturbed by spurious epistles as coming from the alleged Paul (2 Thess. ii. 2). Peter is represented as using the like precaution of naming his scribe (1 Pet. v. 12). If these autographs were of importance to establish the authenticity of the text, it is clear that we should have had the autographs as well as the text. Tertullian, to whom it cost little to make an assertion, assured those he addressed that there were such autographs (327), otherwise they have never been heard of. Speaking of Origen, Dr Scrivener says, "respecting the sacred autographs, their fate or their continued existence, he seems to have had no information, and to have entertained no curiosity: they had simply passed by and were out of his reach," (328), or, it may be better concluded, had never existed.

We may now judge of the tale of Christianity by its proper historical foundations. A divinity is born on earth

visibly moving among mankind ; heavenly voices announce his advent ; when he opens his ministry the spirit of God alights upon him in visible form, and the Deity acknowledges his divine origin in audible tones ; Satan appears in bodily form to subvert him with temptations, but is defeated ; he turns water into wine and creates cooked food out of nothing for the support of thousands ; he controls the elements, quelling a storm and walking on water as on dry land ; he heals the sick with a word or a touch, restoring the lame, the deaf, and the blind ; the devils then infesting mankind leave their victims and vanish at his command ; the dead rise to life obedient to his word ; the ancient Hebrew worthies, Moses and Elijah, return to earth to glorify him ; angels come and minister to him ; he is publicly put to an ignominious death, but rises from the grave, visits and comforts his followers, and ascends before them into heaven ; from thence he sends forth the Spirit of God to be for ever with his people, guiding and instructing them in all things till he should speedily return and take them to himself.

One would think that the revelation of such a being, attended by demonstrations designed to attract attention and fill all minds with wonder and awe, would not fall dead upon the generation so visited, and that every word and outward manifestation from the divine personage so exhibiting himself for the benefit of mankind, would have had its due and full effect, and have left its impress upon the favoured witnesses of these occurrences, and those who immediately succeeded them. Equally should we expect that the mission of the Holy Ghost would not be in vain, that the task committed to him would be duly performed, and that the divinely taught and guided people would stand out in open relief as an exemplar to the darkened world that was to be illuminated by their presence and benefitted by their instructions. Nor could we anticipate that the promise of the early return of the divine

founder would remain, even at a distant day, unredeemed, as a vain utterance, not to be realized. Such, however, is the imaginary portraiture, and such the reverse with which the stern progress of events indubitably presents us.

The facts offered for acceptance are of a character to contradict all experience, and involve a series of disturbances of the governing laws in nature which operate around us in unvarying consistency; a fatal interval of five generations occurs between the facts and their known acceptance by any one, and we have to depend for them, not on witnesses, but on records suspiciously introduced at a later era; nor has the integrity of these records, though said to have been divinely inspired, been preserved. The first to avow belief in the founder of the new faith are those who are condemned as heretics, and the earliest representations about him are in documents rejected as unauthorized and apocryphal. The Holy Ghost abstains from action for five generations and upwards, leaving the field open to the enemy, who occupies it with false professors and spurious narrations. At length a body claiming to be orthodox make their appearance and produce four accounts of the founder for which they claim divine support. With the aid of a Christian advocate we may assure ourselves that two of these are not what they purport to be, but are substitutes for the original writings which in some unaccountable manner have disappeared. A third hangs upon these two and necessarily falls with them. The fourth contradicts all that has gone before it, is obviously framed for dogmatic effect, and is so surrounded with difficulties as to its authenticity as to have become a vehicle for disputations never to be solved satisfactorily by those who would uphold it. On the other hand improving knowledge sets us above the condition of those who in ignorance have accepted these more than questionable scriptures. The proved antiquity of the human race makes us bid